



## ***United States Attorney District of New Jersey***

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### **HOUSTON TRANSPORTATION COMPANY OWNERS SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR TRANSPORTING ILLEGAL ALIENS INTO NEW JERSEY**

NEWARK, N.J. – The owners and operators of a Houston, Texas transportation company were sentenced to prison today for smuggling illegal aliens from Houston to locations on the eastern seaboard, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Angel Bravo, 43, of Houston was sentenced to 40 months in prison. Bravo's stepbrother Gaspar Campos, 37, also of Houston, was sentenced to 32 months in prison. Bravo pleaded guilty on July 14, 2010, to an Indictment charging him with one count of conspiracy to transport illegal aliens and two counts of transporting illegal aliens; Campos pleaded guilty to the same Indictment on July 28, 2010, days before Campos was scheduled to go to trial.

Both defendants entered their guilty pleas before United States District Judge Susan D. Wigenton, who also imposed the sentences today in Newark federal court.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

In the summer of 2007, Campos and Bravo started Transportes Latinos, a Houston-based company in the business of transporting individuals from Houston to locations on the eastern seaboard, including New Jersey. Campos and Bravo admitted they began working with a pair of "coyotes," or human smugglers, who smuggled people across the border from Mexico and brought them to Transportes Latinos to be transported within the United States. The defendants admitted that these coyotes brought people to Transportes Latinos approximately every two weeks, and that they paid the coyotes about \$250 for each illegal alien they brought to the company.

Transportes Latinos employed van drivers to drive loads of passengers from Houston to various locations in the United States for about \$500 cash per load. Before the drivers left with the passengers, they were given a computer-generated passenger list with family contact information and the amount owed for each passenger. These passenger lists hid the actual amount owed by the families; the amount of the transportation fee listed on the passenger list was coded so that what the family members appeared to owe was actually much less than the transportation fee that was actually charged.

The operation also used several local taxi drivers in various parts of the United States. Campos said that whenever he had a van with passengers going to New Jersey or New York, the van drivers arranged to meet taxi drivers in New Jersey who would deliver the passengers to their family members for an additional \$100 fee.

Campos also admitted that Transportes Latinos transported minors who were unaccompanied by parents or grandparents. Testimony at today's sentencing hearing established that children as young as 6 were transported from Houston to New Jersey without a parent or grandparent. The taxi drivers employed by Transportes Latinos then met the incoming vans and delivered the children to their family members in New Jersey.

Campos and Bravo called the coyotes to come collect their money at Transportes Latinos after the passengers had been delivered and the van drivers had returned to Houston. Both men admitted that they knew these aliens were in the country illegally and that they operated their business with the intent to conceal and further their illegal status.

In addition to the prison term, Campos was sentenced to three years of supervised release and was ordered to pay a \$6,000 fine; Bravo was also sentenced to three years of supervised release. In sentencing Bravo, Judge Wigenton took into consideration Bravo's prior conviction for a felony immigration offense. Judge Wigenton also found that Bravo was aware that unaccompanied minors were being transported by the company.

This investigation has also resulted in convictions of six other individuals who pleaded guilty to transporting illegal aliens: Bernardo Fernandez, 56, on March 30, 2009; Nicholas Estrada, 42, on April 7, 2009; Hugo Navarette, 40, on Dec. 15, 2008; Jose Efrain Fuentes, 56, on Oct. 14, 2009; and Camilo Borja-Picaz, 40, on March 10, 2010. All of the defendants are from Houston except Fernandez, of Hackensack, N.J., and Estrada, of New York.

Fernandez and Estrada were local taxi drivers who met the Transportes Latinos vans after they entered New Jersey and delivered passengers to their family members for a fee. Efrain Fuentes, Navarette and Borja-Picaz were van drivers; Borja-Picaz admitted to making as many as three or four trips a month – with up to 13 illegal aliens in each van – during the majority of 2008.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited special agents with Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations in Newark, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Peter T. Edge, with the investigation that led to today's sentences.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Deborah J. Gannett and Scott B. McBride of the U.S. Attorney's Office Health Care and Government Fraud Unit.

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Defense counsel:

Campos: Paul C. Looney, Esq., Houston

Bravo: Ruth Liebesman, Esq., New York